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chapters on "Lincoln on peace"; "Lincoln the most unselfish of men"; and Lincoln's views on religion, temperance, and labor.

Although the author deals with a much discussed subject, yet he has in the opinion of the reviewer made a book which is decidedly worth while. The style is conversational, and like Lincoln's own, simple and direct. The reviewer feels that Judge Wanamaker has amply vindicated his views in regard to the importance of the study of the character of Lincoln.

W. W. SWEET

*Battle of Plattsburg: a study in and of the war of 1812.* To remind our troops of the actions of their brave countryman, — General Macomb, in his report of the battle of Plattsburg. By John M. Stahl (Chicago: Van Trump company, 1918. 166 p. \$1.00)

That such a book as this could be written in the face of almost numberless demonstrations of the fallacy of its thesis, illustrates anew the amazing incapacity of many seemingly intelligent minds to reason correctly or to distinguish truth from error. Mr. Stahl, an "ex-president of the Society of the War of 1812 in Illinois," is moved to indignation over the spectacle of the woful ignorance displayed by Americans with respect to the able and heroic manner in which their forbears waged the war of 1812. Chief responsibility for this sad state of affairs is ascribed to the fact that from New England, a section "early noted for its mental narrowness, its intolerance, its self-righteousness, and assumption of superior wisdom" has proceeded most of our public writing "including that labelled, and libelled, History." To proceed with the indictment, our children in the public and private schools are taught "almost or quite nothing" about the war of 1812, and "yet worse, what is taught is, in nearly every case, and particular, erroneous so far as it relates to the land engagements, and is unjust to . . . the brave soldiers of that War." Because of this "crime" committed against the soldiers of the war of 1812, they "are generally regarded as nearly always incompetent and very often cowardly" and the war itself as "insignificant in purpose and inconclusive and discreditable in results."

Truly a magnitudinous task has Mr. Stahl set himself. Let us note the historical method whereby he proceeds to unravel the long-concealed truth about the war of 1812. Chapter 2, on "Authorities," discloses it. Having read diligently "more than two score" books about the war (fearing, incidentally, that he "must be almost the only person that has read some of these books for many years") he finds that "the sooner after the War the book was written, the more valuable it is as history." It is true some of the early writers were prejudiced; "but they made

no effort to hide that prejudice. . . . They were frankly, openly more concerned to make out their case than to state only the facts and all the facts." To get at the truth from these books is a task "not only easy, but humanly certain, when one has before him, let us say, one book on each side." All he has to do is to "guide his pen midway between the contending piles of statements, or, at times, veer a little to one side or the other of the middle line as is plainly indicated by the heat of the heady writers."

To the reviewer, at least, this appears a remarkable discovery; so simple that one wonders why some of the many workers who are devoting their lives to the study of history should never have stumbled upon it. Notwithstanding the advantage its possession may be presumed to confer, however, Mr. Stahl makes sad work, on the whole, of his narrative of the war of 1812. He disclaims opposition to universal training, yet the whole effect of his study is to nullify this disclaimer and to create the impression that the raw American militia, hastily gathered from highways and byways, and dispersing thereto oftentimes with even greater haste, are the equals in combat of trained and disciplined regular soldiers. To this end he has chosen the battle of Plattsburg as affording the aptest illustration, and has devoted 160 pages to an account of it quite in keeping with the historical method which he himself describes. That Americans are brave, that given proper training, organization, and leadership they are the equal of any soldiers the world can produce, no one out of bedlam would think of disputing. A book written to prove this proposition is a waste of effort. That untrained, undisciplined, unequipped, and unorganized Americans are fit to stand in battle against the world's best soldiery is quite another proposition — one which, it might be supposed, no one not an inmate of bedlam would think of advancing.

The battle of Plattsburg is remarkable for several reasons. The most splendid British army ever sent to America, composed of Wellington's peninsular veterans, seeking to invade the United States turned back before a markedly inferior American force composed largely of raw levies. Well might America recount the story with pride, while to Britain it brings emotions of deepest shame. Does it follow, as our author blandly asserts, that "the few days of actual training given them by Macomb had made these militia and volunteers as good soldiers as any in the world at that time"? The true explanation is quite otherwise. The facts remain, despite this volume written to obscure them, that the decisive factors in the battle of Plattsburg were the brilliant work of our own Macdonough and the mishandling of the British army by Sir George Prevost; and that Wellington's veterans were afforded no opportunity

to test their strength against Macomb's militia levies. In the naval battle, with no striking disparity between the forces engaged, the Americans won a sweeping victory. Through excess of caution which appears extraordinary in view of all the circumstances, Prevost thereupon gave over the campaign and retired with all practicable speed to Canada. That there was no real battle between the land forces is plainly evident from the casualties in the two armies. The loss of the British during the eight-day period ending September 14 was but 37 killed and 150 wounded. The American loss was likewise 37 killed, and 62 wounded. The outcome of the campaign was a disgrace to British annals; but the American militia were an almost negligible factor in the premises. The American soldier may well pray to be spared such apologists as the author of this book.

*Invasion of the city of Washington.* A disagreeable study in and of military unpreparedness. By John M. Stahl (Chicago: Van Trump company, 1918. 257 p. \$1.00)

This book is an historical sermon under fifteen heads on the necessity of military and naval preparedness. The author has sought diligently through the scriptures of American history for texts and, in pursuing his narrative through 1814, has a good old-fashioned moral for the nation of today. Like most sermons the composition is rambling and subjective. The author zealously tries to do his bit to "make the world safe for democracy." Yet in view of the fact that the history of the war of 1812 is just now being rewritten under the auspices of the National security league, with the idea that the United States failed to see the real enemy and took the wrong side in that great war, is it not as well that the preparedness idea was not carried out efficiently in the pre-war period? After all can such a volume with its sweeping deductions make a serious claim to being "history"?

A. C. C.

*Romance of old Philadelphia.* By John T. Faris. (New York: J. B. Lippincott company, 1918. 336 p. \$4.50 net)

Could the pioneer of early times have known how conspicuously he was to figure in the many compilations of the future, he would have been greatly perturbed and perchance written differently the early history of our country — not better perhaps but more conscientiously — probably in some respects less interestingly and picturesquely. At least he would have left more complete records of his doings.

The pioneers of Philadelphia may have guessed the importance their records were destined to have in later days; at any rate they left a generous storehouse.